



Default

Failure to repay a loan according to the terms agreed to when you signed a promissory note.* For the FFEL and Direct Loan programs, default* is more specific—it occurs if you fail to make a payment for 270 days if you repay monthly (or 330 days if your payments are due less frequently). The consequences of default* are severe. Your school, the lender or agency that holds your loan, the state and the federal government may all take action to recover the money, including notifying national credit bureaus of your default.* This may affect your credit rating for as long as seven years. For example, you might find it difficult to borrow money from a bank to buy a car or a house. In addition, the Internal Revenue Service can withhold your U.S. individual income tax refund and apply it to the amount you owe, or the agency holding your loan might ask your employer to deduct payments from your paycheck. Also, you may be liable for loan collection expenses. If you return to school, you're not entitled to receive additional federal student financial aid. Legal action also might be taken against you. In many cases, default* can be avoided by submitting a request for a deferment, forbearance, discharge or cancellation and by providing the required documentation.

Eligible Noncitizen

You must be one of the following to receive federal student aid:

- U.S. citizen
- U.S. national (includes natives of American Samoa or Swain's Island)
- U.S. permanent resident who has an I-151, I-551, or I-551C (Permanent Resident Card)

If you're not in one of these categories, you must have an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) showing one of the following designations:

- "Refugee"
- "Asylum Granted"
- "Cuban-Haitian Entrant, Status Pending"
- "Conditional Entrant" (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)
- Victims of human trafficking, T-visa (T-2, T-3, or T-4, etc.) holder
- "Parolee" (You must be paroled into the United States for at least one year and you must be able to provide evidence from the USCIS that you are in the United States for other than a temporary purpose and that you intend to become a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.)

If you have only a Notice of Approval to Apply for Permanent Residence (I-171 or I-464), you're not eligible for federal student financial aid.

If you're in the United States on certain visas, including an F1 or F2 student visa, or a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, you're not eligible for federal student financial aid.

Also, people with G series visas (pertaining to international organizations) are not eligible for federal student financial aid. For more information about other types of visas that are not acceptable, check with your school's financial aid office. Citizens and eligible noncitizens may receive loans from the FFEL Program at participating foreign schools. Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau are eligible only for Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants or Federal Work-Study. These applicants should check with their schools' financial aid office for more information.

Eligible Program

A program of organized instruction or study that leads to an academic, professional or vocational degree or certificate, or other recognized educational credential. To receive federal student financial aid, you must be enrolled in an eligible program*, with two exceptions:

- If a school has told you that you must take certain course work to qualify for admission into one of its eligible programs, you can get a Stafford Loan for up to 12 consecutive months while you're completing that preparatory course work. You must be enrolled at least half-time*, and you must meet the usual federal student financial aid eligibility requirements.
- If you're enrolled at least half-time* in a program to obtain a professional credential or certification required by a state for employment as an elementary or secondary school teacher, you can get a Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Work-Study, a Stafford Loan, or your parents can get a PLUS Loan, while you're enrolled in that program.

Expected Family Contribution

Your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is the number that's used to determine your eligibility for federal student financial aid. This number results from the financial information you provided in your FAFSA application. Your EFC is reported to you on your *Student Aid Report** (SAR).

Financial Aid Package

The total amount of financial aid (federal and nonfederal) a student is offered by the school. The financial aid administrator at a postsecondary institution combines various forms of aid into a "package" to help meet a student's education costs. Using available resources to give each student the best possible package of aid is one of the aid administrator's major responsibilities. Because funds are often limited, an aid package might fall short of the amount a student needs to cover the full cost of attendance.* Also, the amount of federal student aid in a package is affected by other sources of aid received (scholarships, state aid, etc.).

General Education Development (GED) Certificate

This is a certificate students receive if they've passed a specific, approved high school equivalency test. Students who have a GED may still qualify for federal student aid. A school that admits students without a high school diploma must make available a GED program in the vicinity of the school and must inform students about the program.

Guaranty Agency

The guaranty agency is an organization that administers the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program in your state. This agency is the best source of information on FFEL Loans. For the name, address and telephone number of the agency serving your state, you can contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

Half-time

At schools measuring progress in credit hours and semesters, trimesters, or quarters, "half-time" is at least six semester hours or quarter hours per term for an undergraduate program. At schools measuring progress by credit hours but not using semesters, trimesters or quarters, "half-time" is at least 12 semester hours or 18 quarter hours per year. At schools measuring progress by clock hours, "half-time" is at least 12 hours per week. Note that schools may choose to set higher minimums than these. You must be attending school at least half-time to be eligible for a Stafford Loan. Half-time enrollment is not a requirement to receive aid from the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Work-Study and Federal Perkins Loan programs.

* See "Important Terms," page 38.

Terms frequently used in discussing financial aid throughout this publication will appear with an asterisk, and you'll find a description of them under "Important Terms," beginning on page 38.